NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE - MEDFORD, OREGON

Summer 2011
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THE CRATER CHRONICLE

Follow NWS Medford on Facebook!

By Mike Ottenweller, Meteorologist

The National Weather Service is embracing social media more and more each day, and your local Medford office is no exception. On May 10, the NWS Medford Facebook page went live. We joined more than 150 million active Facebook users across the United States on the world's most popular website. The NWS first experimented using Facebook at the Dallas/ Fort Worth office in October of 2010. After a successful prototype there, it expanded to nine other offices in January 2011. The success stories continued, and interaction with the public grew at such a rapid rate, that now, all 122 Weather Forecast Offices and the 13 River Forecast Centers have Facebook pages.

With so many people getting information online these days, Facebook provides another medium to exchange important material. During the NWS test-phase of Facebook, the Honolulu and Central Pacific Hurricane Center provided real-time updates on the tsunami. Their number of fans jumped from approximately 320 before the event to over 3,400. From the winter storms in the Northeast to the severe weather outbreaks in the Plains and Southeast, Facebook has proven to be a very effective way to share news. It conjoined the NWS with other critical partners such as Emergency Managers and the news media to provide consolidated information. All of this coupled with the ease, speed, and simplicity of Facebook likely saved lives during these significant weather events.

Locate the NWS Medford Facebook page at:
http://www.facebook.com/NationalWeatherService.Medford.gov

The NWS Medford Facebook page has been very busy in its first month. Our office posts Weather Story graphics, current weather headlines, important updates, outreach activities, and more. Our picture posts have been fan favorites and provide an opportunity to display some of the truly unique weather we experience in Northern California and Southern Oregon. We also use it to gather important information from you, the local public, to find out exactly what weather is occurring in your immediate area. You can use the page to interact with us by asking questions, providing feedback, or perhaps sparking meteorological discussions. Our Facebook page gives you quick and straightforward access to all of our services. It is important to note that you do not need a Facebook account to view the page, but you will need an account to post to the Wall and access other features.

As we strive to enhance our community presence, we encourage you and your friends to check out the NWS Medford Facebook page. It provides another great avenue for information exchange, which leads to better awareness for all.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Summer Begins June 21 at 10:16 am PDT.

Keep Your Pet Cool When Summertime Heat Strikes

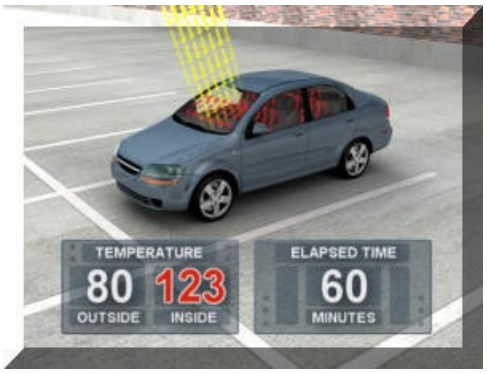
By John Lovegrove, Meteorologist-In-Charge

It may be hard to realize it, considering the recent weather we have been having, but it will eventually get hot across much of Southwest Oregon and Northern California. Only the immediate coastal areas are relatively immune to the high temperatures. As a former coastal resident myself, I remember thinking 65° is shorts weather.

I'd like to take this opportunity to put out a reminder for us all to think of our furry, four-legged friends when the temperature climbs. Hot weather can make us all uncomfortable, and it poses special risks for your dog and cat. Keep the following safety concerns in mind as the temperature rises, and follow these tips to keep your pet cool and safe. The following tips come from the American Kennel Club website:

1) If your pet is outside on a hot day, make sure he/she has a shady spot to rest in. Doghouses are not good shelter during the summer as they can trap heat. You may want to fill a child's wading pool with fresh water for your dog to cool off in.

2) Never leave your pet in a closed vehicle on a sunny day. The temperature inside a car can rise to over 100 degrees in a matter of minutes, even on mild days. In the graphic below, which depicts the results of an experiment conducted by General Motors, the temperature outside of the car was 80 degrees. Within an hour, the temperature inside the car soared to over 120 degrees. It is also never a good idea to leave your dog in the back of a pickup on sunny days. There is no shade available.



3) Always provide plenty of cool, fresh water. Avoid strenuous exercise on extremely hot days. Take walks in the early mornings or evenings, when the sun's heat is less intense. Try to avoid prolonged exposure to hot asphalt or sand, which can burn your dog's paws.

4) Dogs that are brachycephalic (short-faced), such as Bulldogs, Boxers, Japanese Chins, and Pekingese, have an especially hard time in the heat because they do not pant as efficiently as longer-faced dogs. Keep your brachycephalic dog inside with air-conditioning.

MIC's Corner

5) Dogs and cats, especially those with short hair, white fur, and pink skin, can sunburn. Limit your pet's exposure during the day and apply sunblock to his ears and nose 30 minutes before going outside.

6) When visiting the beach, do not let your dog drink seawater; the salt will make him sick. Salt and other minerals in ocean water can damage your dog's coat, so rinse him off at the end of the day. Not all beaches permit dogs; check local ordinances before heading out.

Heat safety is not just limited to dogs and cats but can include any animals that reside outside during the warm months. Small animals such as pet rabbits that live in outdoor hutches are especially susceptible to the heat. If they cannot be brought inside, one tip to help them cool down and beat the heat is to reuse an empty half-gallon (128 oz.) paper orange juice container with a screw-on cap. Fill the container with water and place it in the freezer. Pull the container from the freezer when it has completely hardened into a block of ice and place it on its side on the floor of the animal's cage. This will allow the animal to lay up against the ice and stay cool.

Disaster Notification in the 21st Century

By Ryan Sandler, Warning Coordination Meteorologist

Let's say you live in Klamath Falls, and you are spending your summer vacation in Bandon. You and your family are walking along the beach admiring a beautiful sunset by taking pictures with your phone and sending these beautiful images to friends. Suddenly, your cell phone sounds an unusual alert along with an unfamiliar vibration. You look at your phone and see a short text message that reads, **"A major 9.0 earthquake has occurred off Alaska. A tsunami warning is in effect"**. You quickly decide to leave the beach, go inland to higher ground, and find out what's happening.

This is what the future of emergency notification will look like, and it will revolutionize the way you receive emergency messages. Currently, most people receive emergency messages through television, radio, or NOAA Weather Radio. Receiving real-time emergency messages automatically on your cell phone will be a major advancement in the warning system that will save lives. This new alert system, known as the Personal Localized Alerting Network (PLAN), will be tested in New York City and Washington, D.C., before the end of 2011. All of the major wireless providers volunteered to participate in this program. Here are the key features of this plan:

1) You need to have a new mobile device to receive these warnings.

2) The text message will be accompanied by a unique audio alert and vibration. The text message will be short (fewer than 90 characters) and will not contain URLs to avoid network slowdowns as everyone tries to get to that web page.

3) There will be only three types of text messages. The first message will be a Presidential Message for a national emergency. The second message will be for Amber Alerts, and the third message will be for public safety emergencies such as tornadoes.

4) The text message will be geographically targeted. For example, you live in Roseburg but have travelled to Klamath Falls for the day. A tornado warning is issued for part of Klamath County, including the city of Klamath Falls. You would receive the text message because it will be sent to cell towers around Klamath County.

5) Alerts are free and will be pushed out, meaning you don't have to opt in. You will have the ability to opt-out, except for Presidential Messages.

The PLAN system will not be available in our area until at least the summer of 2012 and only newer phones will have this capability to receive these emergency alerts. This notification system will supplement the Emergency Alert System (EAS) and will eventually have the ability to reach most of the nation. As warning meteorologists, we are left wondering how many people would have been safer in the Southeast during the recent historic tornado outbreak if their cell phones had alerted them to the danger sooner.

Learn How to Break the Grip of the Rip Currents!

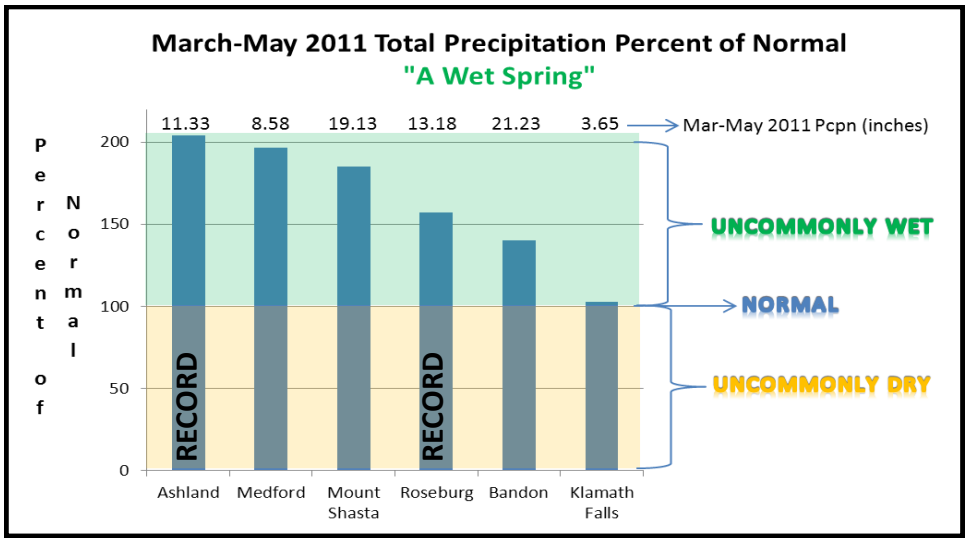
The NWS' Rip Current Awareness Week took place from June 5-11, 2011. This is designed to highlight rip current safety for coastal locations in the U.S., which includes beaches along the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Great Lakes. As the summer season gets underway, more people head to the beach to escape the heat but may be unaware that swimming at a surf beach is much different than swimming in a pool. Rip currents can form at any time and without warning, but remaining calm and knowing how to swim out of the current and then to shore will help you manage to break the grip of the rip. For more information on rip currents, visit the NWS page at:

http://www.ripcurrents.noaa.gov

Summarizing the Soggy Spring Weather

By Shad Keene, Meteorologist

I've heard this phrase many times over the past month or two: "When is summer going to arrive?" Technically, one could answer June 21st, when the sun reaches its most northern point in the sky at local noon. However, once Memorial Day arrives, most people begin to expect a warming and drying trend, so it's understandable that this spring's weather pattern has people wondering if the rain is ever going to quit and when they can begin to plant those temperature-sensitive vegetables.



What constitutes a wet spring in our area, and how wet was it this spring? One way to think about this is in terms of "percent of normal". This is achieved by dividing the 2011 observed precipitation in March, April, and May by what is normally observed in March, April, and May (precipitation averaged over the 30 years from 1971-2000). Once you multiply the result by 100, you now have the percent of normal. When the percent of normal is greater than 100, it means that uncommonly wet conditions occurred, while numbers below 100 represent uncommonly dry conditions. Of note, even though spring continues into June, meteorologists often combine the three months of March, April, and May to represent the spring.

As you can see in the graph below, all six cities in the graph experienced an uncommonly wet spring. There were even a few records. The actual observed precipitation amounts for each city are on top of the graph. One interesting note is that the wettest conditions, compared to normal, occurred along the I-5 corridor from Mount Shasta City through Roseburg. This marks the second consecutive spring with above normal precipitation in much of the forecast area.

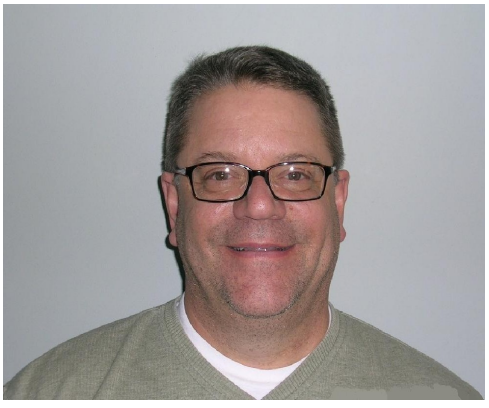
NWS Medford Bids Farewell to Longtime Forecaster

By John Lovegrove, Meteorologist-In-Charge

After a 35-year career of government service, including the National Weather Service, forecaster Rick Holtz is heading into retirement. While at the NWS, Rick first served as a meteorological technician in Phoenix, Arizona; Astoria, Oregon; and Eugene, Oregon, before coming to Medford as a meteorologist. Rick's last day at the Medford office will be July 1.

Rick's career shows a dedication to the mission of the NWS and to maintaining the integrity of the science of meteorology. His operational experience and professional insight, particularly with wind forecasting and fire weather, make him an invaluable member of the forecast team. Rick authored a study on forecasting the potential for high winds in the Shasta and Rogue Valleys that forecasters continually refer to. Rick also served as an Incident Meteorologist, or IMET, for a time and was deployed to numerous wildfires across the Western U.S., to provide on-site, highly detailed weather forecasts and briefings to fire officials. His expertise, enthusiasm for fire weather, and valued accomplishments through the course of his career are not only widely respected, but greatly appreciated.

Unlike many professions, we in the NWS measure success in human lives saved and disasters averted. This is because individuals such as Rick serve with their full energy, talents, and abilities. Everyone at NWS Medford is sincerely grateful to Rick for a job well done. We wish Rick and his family all the best in their retirement years.



Forecaster Rick Holtz

June Brings Focus on Lightning Safety

The summer season brings many people outdoors to enjoy the numerous activities available in Southern Oregon and Northern California. The summer season also brings an increased threat of thunderstorms to develop. If a thunderstorm developed nearby, do you know what you would do?

The NWS' annual Lightning Safety Week is from June 19-25, 2011. This week is designed to raise awareness about one of the most deadly weather phenomena. Each year, an average of 55 people are killed by lightning nationwide, while hundreds of others are permanently injured.

Don't be fooled by clear blue skies above you! Lightning strikes as far as 10 miles away from any rainfall both ahead of and behind any thunderstorm.

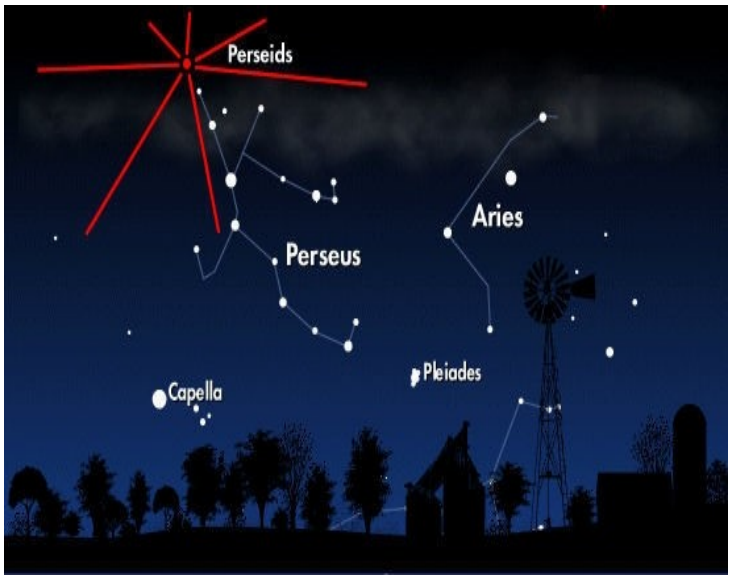
While the National Weather Service issues severe thunderstorm watches and warnings based on damaging winds or hail, watches and warnings are NOT issued for lightning. Look for darkening skies, increasing wind, or flashes of lightning to alert you that the weather may be changing. A battery-powered NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards will allow you to monitor any short-term forecasts that are issued for developing thunderstorms as well as any watches or warnings. To find out more, go to: **http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov**.

Summer's Meteor Showers Light Up the Night Sky

The Southern Delta Aquarids Meteor Shower begins July 18 and peaks July 28-29, producing 20 meteors per hour. The shower will then fade away by August 18. The shower will appear to radiate from the constellation Aquarius. From a dark location, the best viewing is to the east after midnight.

The annual Perseids Meteor Shower gets underway July 23 and is summer's most recognizable meteor shower. The best viewing will occur August 13 and 14 after midnight, with an estimated 60 meteors per hour in the northeastern sky. One hindrance this year will be the full moon, so find a location far away from city lights. It is possible to see meteors as late as August 22 during the meteor shower.

On August 11, Neptune makes its closest pass to Earth and is fully illuminated by the Sun, appearing as a tiny blue dot in most telescopes. Also check the Satellite Flybys Calendar on SpaceWeather.com for when the International Space Station passes overhead. This appears to look like a very bright star or planet arcing through the sky as it moves at a fast rate of speed.



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Visit Our Website!

http://www.weather.gov/medford

Our Vision

Professionals focusing on science, teamwork, and customer service to design and deliver the best decision-support information to our community.

Our Mission

Our team at the National Weather Service Office in Medford strives to deliver the best observational, forecast, and warning information through exceptional customer service, extensive training and education, maintaining quality electronic systems, and relying upon an outstanding team of weather spotters and cooperative observers. We do this within the overall mission of the NWS:

To provide weather, hydrologic, and climate forecasts and warnings for the United States, its territories, adjacent waters and ocean areas, for the protection of life and property and the enhancement of the national economy. NWS data and products form a national information database and infrastructure which can be used by other governmental agencies, the private sector, the public, and the global community.

Our Values

Trust, Integrity, Professionalism, Service, Teamwork, Ingenuity, Expertise, and Enthusiasm.

About Us

The Weather Forecast Office in Medford, Oregon, is one of more than 120 field offices of the National Weather Service, an agency under the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the United States Department of Commerce. The Weather Forecast Office in Medford serves 7 counties in southwestern Oregon and 2 counties in northern California, providing weather and water information to more than a half-million citizens. We are also responsible for the coastal waters of the Pacific Ocean from Florence, Oregon, to Point St. George, California, extending 60 miles offshore. The office is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year by a team of 26 meteorologists, hydrologists, electronic technicians, hydro-meteorological technicians, and administrative assistants, under the direction of Meteorologist-In-Charge John Lovegrove.